

**By Whose Authority?
Luke 4:31-44**

By Rev Dan Berteau

Epiphany 4
31 January 2010

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our text for this morning's message is taken from the Gospel reading, from the 4th Chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

As I prepared this sermon for today we are smack dab in the middle of the 2 weeks of preparation for the Super bowl. (As you know I had a vested interest in seeing one of last four teams win, but alas, it was not to be, as the Vikings will have to wait yet another year. Now all the Superbowl talk will be of the New Orleans, Saints and the Indianapolis Colts. This week if you are a football fan like me, you just can't get enough Super bowl talk...I know, I know...most people wish it would just be over. But anyway, this week there will be all kinds of predictors and prognosticators, analyzers, and authorities being trotted out to predict the winner of next week's Superbowl. I wouldn't doubt it if Puxetawny Phil weighed in with his prediction for the NFL champion!

But finding the real authority to speak on a matter is often up to great debate. At work we hear the statement, "Who made that decision?" At home we hear, "Who said you could spend our money THAT way?" Even in the church we hear it so often, "Who said "they" could make that decision?" Yes, even in the church there is discussion about who or what has the authority to do this or that?" Even today/yesterday many of us were searching for answers as we wondered who had the authority to cancel Sunday services.

Last week, when Chaplain Oswald preached to us we heard the Gospel lesson from the verses in Scripture right before today's text. In the early verses of Luke chapter 4 we remember how Jesus went back to His home town of Nazareth in Galilee and went into the synagogue and was handed the scroll of Isaiah to read where Isaiah foretold of Jesus' ministry. Remember, He read those famous words: **"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me**

to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.” Then when Jesus was finished He handed them the scroll and said: **“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”** And the teachers and people in the synagogue were ok with that until Jesus began telling them that everything wasn't OK with them and that they had rejected the prophets that God had sent in the past. When Jesus said those things, then they got ticked! They got so mad that they drove Jesus out of town to a cliff so that they might throw him off of it and kill him—but as you know Jesus just walked right through them to safety. But there we have it-- those teachers and people in the synagogue , in a way, asked our question of the day. By what authority do you do these things? This would not be the last time Jesus' authority would be challenged. No very frequently the Chief Priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, and even the average people would wonder by what authority could and did Jesus say and do these things. And really, that is what the season of Epiphany is all about. It is about how Jesus revealed or made manifest to the world who He was and by what authority He did the things He did.

In our coming Epiphany and Pentecost Gospel texts, Jesus would begin to show the world through what He did and through what He said that indeed He alone HAS the authority. Here in these verses from Luke 4, Jesus began by showing that He had authority over demons. In our world today the world dismisses the idea that demons are real and that there are people possessed by them. And if people are brave enough to confess that maybe demons are real, then certainly they are rare and certainly not possessing anyone in Hampton Roads or Norfolk, and certainly not anyone we know. The world wants to think that demons are either a thing of the past, or a thing of someone's twisted imagination in horror movies like the Exorcist, or that they have no real power in this world. But mark God's word—demons are very real, and they are very present, and they are

very powerful in our world. Ephesians six God warns us to: **Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.** Indeed demons are real and they are powerful. And we as God's people had better be all about putting the armor of God's Word on in our lives. The devil, (and I add his demons) are indeed as 1st Peter 5:8 says, prowling around like a roaring lion just looking for whom he may devour.

But for Jesus, demons are no match. I mean look in the text. Verse 33 and following say: **In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil^[g] spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice,³⁴"Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"⁵"Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.** Indeed, no match at all. Jesus didn't have to convince the demon to leave. He didn't beg him to come out. NO, He COMMANDED the demon to come out. Jesus, the One in whom nothing was made that has been made had the authority as co-creator of the universe to demand anything from that demon. And the instant He rebuked that demon to be silent and come out—the demon obeyed. When the people saw Jesus' power they were amazed and reports of Jesus' power and authority began to spread.

In our text for today, not only does Jesus His authority and power over demons but He also reveals his power and authority over illness. Jesus left the synagogue that day and went over to Simon Peter's mother-in-law's house. The scripture says that she was very sick with a high fever. And remember, back in 33AD they didn't have the wonders of Advil and Tylenol. They didn't have penicillin or other bacterial shots that could cure illness like we do today. But Simon, after

seeing what Jesus did with the water to wine thing over in Cana, and seeing that power over the demon thing over in the synagogue knew he had someone with great power and authority. So he and the others appealed to Jesus to cure Simon's mother-in-law. So Jesus **stood over her and rebuked her fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.** Again just like the demon, this illness didn't have to be massaged to have to come out of her, this illness didn't have to be begged to come out, there was no therapy given first—No. Jesus just stood over the woman and commanded that fever to come out and it obeyed! There were no runny noses or lingering coughs, or sniffles following the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, no, she just arose and fully back to strength began to serve the One who cured her. As you can imagine, word about what Jesus had done there in that house began to spread throughout the whole town, so much so that all those who were sick were brought to Jesus and He laid His hands on every one of them and cured them! Every one of them. Over and over again Jesus would pour out his power and show His authority over sickness and the demons in that city and never once was there a battle. The Lord of life and death, the Lord over sickness and disease commanded these things to come out and they obeyed.

So what does all this have to do with us—with you and me, and those listening over the internet? What would God's word have to speak to us about these events for today. Well, I think first and foremost, is that, in Jesus, we have a powerful God who no authority or power or demon or sickness has any little bit of power over. Jesus, was there at the creation of the world and when this God incarnate came in humility as a man to redeem the world, He didn't leave His power up in heaven. No, in Him all the fullness of the Godhead lives in bodily form. And two, this powerful God in Jesus cared to intervene in the lives of regular people. He didn't spend His time traveling around the world looking for kings and princes to heal their sick, no Jesus came to the average Joe

and Jane who needed help. He came to an outcast there in Capernaum and cast the demon out. He came to an average woman in a nondescript town and healed her of her fever. When people brought all sorts of folks to Jesus that evening, He cured and cared for every one of them the scripture says. For each us in 2010 this is good news. It is good news because Jesus we know that like all of those sick and diseased who Jesus had compassion on, He loves and cares for us too. In the midst of our broken world full of BLIZZARDS, hurricanes and fires, tornadoes, finances collapsing, unemployment, sickness and disease, we can know that Jesus cares for us as well. He knows of these things in this life and He has compassion. He cares for us and loves us even in the midst of the tragedies of this world that we live in. Like Peter's mother-in-law, sometimes in this life we have to live life with that fever for a while before the Lord cures us. But even in the midst of the worst of the storms of life, even in the midst of waiting upon the Lord to take the pain away or make things right in our life again...Two things are certain, 1) -that God in Christ has the power and authority over whatever ails us and 2) -that Jesus does care for us individually. Each and every one of us...no one is excluded from God's grace. For God so loved the world that WHOSOEVER believes shall not perish but have everlasting life. Jesus knew the failings and sins of Peter's mother-in-law and He came and cured her anyway. Jesus knew the sins and wickedness that we have in our hearts and He still came and died on the cross to save us. Jesus knew us and still died on the cross to forgive us and has come to us and gifted us with the faith to believe in Him. What a blessing. What an awesome God. What a powerful friend we have in Jesus.

So what then? What are we to do with this passage of Christ showing love in such powerful authoritative ways? Well, I'll tell you what we shouldn't do...we shouldn't be silent. We should indeed lift up our prayers and our praises to this awesome Jesus. We should go out like

the people of that town did and bring others to the One who has the power to cure and forgive and comfort and save them. By what authority are we to do this? By whose authority are we to be proclaimers of this Good News Word? You know. By the authority of Jesus. Indeed By the authority of Jesus we care to not only be comforted in the Gospel message, but we are commissioned to go and bring cure to others. By What Authority? ---By the authority of Jesus—remember...Matthew 28—ALL authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore GO, and make disciples of all nations baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything He has commanded us. And SURELY, this POWERFUL God, in whose possession is all authority, this One will be with you to the very end of the age. Amen.

And may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in this Christian faith, to life everlasting. Amen.